

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for interacting with a user over a peer-to-peer network comprising:
receiving a file from a user via a third party;
receiving with the file an alias identifying the user; and
storing in the third party identity information about the user in association with the
alias; and
linking the alias to a valid legal identity and financial account while maintaining
control and privacy over the valid legal identify and the financial account.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the file is received along with a
content rating from the user.
3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the user can select one or more
information elements within identity information that can be sent along with the alias.
4. The method according to claim 2, wherein the one or more information
elements include one or more of the following: an email address, a name, a mailing
address, a telephone number, and a social security number.
5. The method according to claim 2, wherein the one or more information
elements include one or more of the following: a bank account number, a credit card

number, an age, a birth date, income information, employment information, purchasing preference information, and an education history.

6. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

aggregating by the third party the content ranking with a plurality of other content rankings from other users and making this available to others without identification of the users or aliases.

7. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

acting as an intermediary between the user and other users to protect the privacy of the user and to enable financial or marketing transactions to occur between the user and another user or company.

8. A method for protecting personal information in a peer-to-peer environment comprising:

storing in a third party server personal information for a plurality of users and one or more aliases for each of the plurality of users; and

sending a file from a first user of the plurality of users to a second user of the plurality of users through the third party server without identifying a source of the file other than by an alias of the first user and without identifying a destination of the file other than by an alias of the second user.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein each of the plurality of users can select one or more information elements within the personal information that can be sent along with the alias.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the one or more information elements include one or more of the following: an email address, a name, a mailing address, a telephone number, and a social security number.

11. The method according to claim 9, wherein the one or more information elements include one or more of the following: a bank account number, a credit card number, an age, a birth date, income information, employment information, purchasing preference information, and an education history.

12. A method for transmitting files in a peer-to-peer environment comprising:
receiving at a third party server a request from a first user for a particular file in possession of a second user;
retrieving the particular file from the second user without identifying the first user except with a first alias; and
sending the particular file to the first user without identifying the second user except with a second alias.

13. The method according to claim 12, further comprising:

storing in the third party server identity information for each of the first and second users along with one or more aliases for each of the first and second users.

14. The method according to claim 12, wherein each of the first and second users can select one or more information elements within the identity information that can be sent along with their alias.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the one or more information elements include one or more of the following: an alias identification element, an email address, a name, a mailing address, a telephone number, and a social security number.

16. The method according to claim 14, wherein the one or more information elements include one or more of the following: an alias identification element, a bank account number, a credit card number, an age, a birth date, income information, employment information, purchasing preference information, and an education history.

17. An apparatus for transmitting one or more files in a peer-to-peer environment, comprising:

a database storing identity information for at least two users along with one or more aliases for each of the at least two users; and

a server to receive requests for the one or more files from a destination user of the

at least two users, to upload a requested file from a source user of the at least two users, and to transmit said requested file to the destination user along with an alias of the source user and to transmit an alias of the destination user to the source user.

18. The apparatus according to claim 17, further comprising a user interface via which each of the at least two users can create one or more aliases, enter personal identity information associated with each of the one or more aliases and selectively control whether one or more information elements within the personal identity information for each of the one or more aliases is transmitted along with the alias.

19. The apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the one or more information elements include one or more of the following: an alias identification element, an email address, a name, a mailing address, a telephone number, a social security number, a bank account number, a credit card number, an age, a birth date, income information, employment information, purchasing preference information, and an education history.

20. The apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the user interface further enables a user to provide a list of approved users to which the user can selectively reveal one or more information elements.